

MRS. AMELIA A. H. RICHARDS.

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JANUARY 19, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. BUCK, from the Committee on War Claims, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 558.]

The Committee on War Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 558) for the relief of Mrs. Amelia A. H. Richards, report that they concur in the conclusions embodied in the report of this committee in the Fifty-second Congress (a copy thereof being hereto attached as part of this report), and recommend the passage of the bill, with the following amendment:

In lines 7 and 8 strike out "fifteen thousand two hundred and seventy-two dollars" and insert in lieu thereof "six thousand three hundred and thirty-five dollars."

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[House Report No. 400, Fifty-second Congress, first session.]

The Committee on War Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Mrs. Amelia A. H. Richards, submit the following report:

This measure was considered by this committee in the Forty-fifth Congress, and was reported upon favorably, which report is appended as a part of this report.

Your committee concur in the conclusions stated in that report, and report herewith a bill for the relief of the claimant, and recommend its passage.

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[House Report No. 204, Forty-fifth Congress, second session.]

The Committee on War Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Mrs. Amelia A. H. Richards, administratrix of the estate of Felix Richards, late of Fairfax County, Va., having considered the same, report:

That the said Mrs. Richards resided with her husband on a farm of one hundred and fifty-six acres, known as "Volusia," in Fairfax County, Va., at the breaking out of the war. During the entire rebellion the region of country in which the farm was situated was the theater of war, a considerable part of the time of a guerrilla character, the main portion of the time, however, the property being occupied by Union troops. In August, 1861, Gen. Kearney's brigade occupied the farm, and the tents of Gen. Kearney and his staff were pitched in the yard; the said officers were frequently entertained and provided for by the said Felix Richards. A safeguard was given and strict orders issued to protect the property of Mr. Richards, his loyalty being undisputed. In spite, however, of all this several outbuildings were destroyed, fields of corn were stripped, and growing crops were taken or destroyed. Several of the outbuildings were taken for the construction of quarters and floors of tents, and were largely used in that way; among others a hospital tent was constructed entirely from materials taken in that way.

Claim is made by Mrs. Richards for fencing, wood, buildings, such as carriage and

machine house, ice house, stable, corn houses, etc.; for hay, oats, corn growing in the ear; for horses, carriages, lumber, cattle, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigs, sheep, etc.; the damage to land by destruction of fruit and ornamental trees; in all, amounting to \$15,272.

It appears that several brigades of United States troops camped upon Mr. Richards's place. Succeeding Gen. Kearney's command, among others was that of Gen. Howard, which occupied Volusia for six months in the year 1862, which officer makes the following statement: "With reference to the wood and fences, I think there is no exaggeration in the accompanying statement (referring to the claim made by Mrs. Richards). My brigade used a great deal of wood, and other brigades close by did the same." It also appears that a contract was entered into between Mr. Richards and Col. Cross, whose command succeeded Gen. Howard's, by which Mr. Richards was to furnish wood then cut and corded on the farm, and a large amount of this wood was actually delivered, for which payment was not made, by reason of the fact of the transfer of that command to another point. Gen. Sykes's brigade, as well also as the commands at Forts Worth and Ward, also used wood from Mr. Richards's farm.

There is abundant testimony as to loyalty of Mr. Richards and his family, among others being the certificates of Col. Kellogg and Maj. Smith, of the Nineteenth Connecticut Infantry, which for a long time was on duty in the forts adjacent to Alexandria. Various staff officers of Gen. Kearney also commend Mr. Richards and his family as entitled to consideration at the hands of all Union officers. F. D. Sewell, A. A. G. on Gen. O. O. Howard's staff, also indorses Mr. Richards very strongly, as does Gen. Miles, then colonel of the Fifth Infantry. Gen. Barlow, on June 10, since attorney-general of the State of New York, commends Mr. Richards very strongly to the favorable consideration of the military authorities at Washington, and recommends that he be appointed in one of the Departments. There are also letters from Gen. Howard and Gen. Duryea, who state that the property of Mr. Richards was used by the troops, and that it should be paid for.

In the judgment of your committee, the proof sustains the taking of fifteen hundred panels of fencing, worth 75 cents per panel; one thousand cords of wood, at \$3 per cord; fifteen tons of timothy hay, worth \$20 per ton; ten tons of oats, at \$20 per ton; five horses, at \$150 each; ten thousand feet of new lumber, for building barracks and floors of tents, worth \$200; five head of cattle, worth \$140; four hogs, worth \$20, and ten thousand brick, at \$6 per thousand.

The proof submitted fully warrants the conclusion that the property above mentioned was taken for the use of the Army, and was actually used by it. Claim is made for destruction of property, such as outbuildings, etc., for damages to growing crops, and to land by the drilling of the soldiers thereon, as well as for a large number of farming utensils, taken, used, and destroyed, which your committee regard as in the main the depredations of private soldiers and the ravage of war, for which the Government is not and can not be held legally responsible.

The committee therefore report the accompanying bill appropriating the sum of \$6,335, and recommend its passage.